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Oct. 17, 2000

New Titleist ball is all the rage

GolfWeb Wire Services

GAINESVILLE, Va. -- Phil Mickelson had been raving about Titleist's new solid-construction ball since he first tested it in July. When the ball finally made its debut, he wasn't alone.

Nearly one-third of the field at the Invensys Classic at Las Vegas used the Pro V1 392 ball, which features an unusually large core and extra-thin cover. That made Titleist not only the No. 1 solid ball (47 players) on the PGA TOUR last week, but also tops in wound ball (41).

"It goes to show you that we can take appropriate action to respond to changes in product performance warranted by the best players in the game," Titleist chief Wally Uihlein said.

It also was a response to Nike, Callaway and Spalding, which have touted trends away from the wound ball, of which Titleist has always been the leader.

Uihlein said that 55 percent of Titleist's sales are non-wound balls, so the company is hardly a newcomer to solid- construction technology.

He also said the patent on the technology for the new ball was issued in 1997, after two years of research. So what took so long to bring it to market?

Uihlein cited an old IBM strategy -- let everyone take their best shot, then answer.

"In a competitive environment, it's better to know what you're shooting at than shooting in the dark," Uihlein said. "We watched everyone launch their ships, then we responded."

Greg Norman practiced with the new ball Tuesday at The Presidents Cup, and as many as half of the 24 players at Robert Trent Jones Golf Club are expected to use it. Uihlein said he expects at least 50 players to switch at the Tampa Bay Classic.

LPGA Q-school

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